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ABSTRACT

Existing federal laws require training for paraeducators hired with federal funds. The challenge of professional development for paraeducators has become more acute as they have increased dramatically in absolute numbers and as a proportion of all instructional staff. This report is a guide to state and local education agencies that are designing policies for paraeducator development. It highlights existing programs that demonstrate key elements of effective paraeducator development and describes in detail some promising programs in the states of Iowa and Washington. The paper suggests resources for possible standards and guidelines for state and local education agencies exploring how to appropriately train their paraeducators, and it offers information about postsecondary educational programs and the current scope of paraeducator training and employment. The report emphasizes that the purposeful use of paraeducators includes providing them with clear objectives coordinated with the mission of the school. Three appendixes include a listing of existing or proposed state paraeducator certification policies, a history of paraeducator programs, and highlights of other paraeducator training initiatives. (Contains 30 references.) (SM)

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DESIGNING STATE AND LOCAL POLICIES FOR THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL PARAEDUCATORS

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January 2002

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Existing federal laws require training for paraeducators (i.e., instructional aides or teacher assistants) hired with federal funds. These laws include the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (ESEA reauthorization) and the 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Both laws stress that paraeducators must be well trained to increase the learning opportunities for all students.

The challenge of professional development for paraeducators has become more acute as they have increased dramatically in absolute numbers and as a proportion of all instructional staff. The number of instructional aides in the United States increased more than 50 percent (based on full time equivalents) from 1990 to 1999, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES 1993, 2001, 2001a). During the same period, the total staff of public schools increased 25 percent and the number of teachers increased 21 percent. In 1990, the ratio of teachers to instructional aides was 6.1 to 1. By 1999, that ratio had fallen to 4.7 to 1. In large part, these numbers reflect public schools' commitment to serve rapidly increasing numbers of special education and limited-English-proficient students.

This report is a general guide to state and local education agencies that are designing policies for paraeducator development. Existing programs that demonstrate the key elements of effective paraeducator development are highlighted. Promising programs in the states of Iowa and Washington are described in some detail. Resources for possible standards and guidelines are suggested for states and local educational agencies exploring how to appropriately train their paraeducators. Information about post-secondary educational programs and the current scope of paraeducator training and employment are also presented.

Paraeducators are a valuable asset, offering a wealth of additional instructional time for students. But just as gold needs to be carefully mined and refined, talented paraeducators need to be diligently recruited and cultivated to optimally assist students. This report emphasizes that the purposeful use of paraeducators includes providing them with clear objectives coordinated with the mission of the school. In ensuring that all students will learn to read by the end of third grade and meet academic standards, the wise use of paraeducators offers a means to help every student reach their academic potential.

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I. Background

I-A. A Growing Consensus for Raising Paraeducator Qualifications

Over the course of the 1990s, a consensus developed at all policy levels on the need to strengthen paraeducator preservice and inservice training. This trend is closely related to the dominant educational theme of the 1990s: bringing curriculum, instruction, assessment, and teacher development into alignment with rigorous state standards for student achievement. Paraeducators need to be prepared to work in settings where expectations of students are being raised.

Data released in 2001 from the National Center for Education Statistics reveal that there was a 57 percent increase in instructional paraprofessional employment relative to a 14 percent increase in student enrollment and a 21 percent increase in teacher employment for the years 1990 to 1999.

In its 1994 reauthorization of Title I, the federal government included paraeducators under general requirements for professional development with an option for career ladder programs (U.S. Code, Title 20, Section 6320, 1994). Title I, the largest program of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), is designed to close the achievement gap for poor and otherwise disadvantaged children. The focus of Title I shifted from a remedial to a high-standards program in the 1994 ESEA reauthorization.

In January 2002, President Bush signed a law that further strengthens federal requirements for Title I paraprofessionals. This law, known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, reauthorizes ESEA, including Title I, for another six years. The focus of the legislation is to help disadvantaged children achieve to the same high state performance standards as others. No later than four years after enactment, all paraprofessionals will need to have:

- Completed at least two years of study at an institution of higher education; OR
- Obtained an associate's (or higher) degree; OR
- Met a rigorous standard of quality and can demonstrate, through a formal State or local academic assessment, knowledge and ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and mathematics or knowledge and ability to assist in instructing reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness, as appropriate.

Paraprofessionals hired after the enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 will need to meet the above requirements. Exceptions are made for those paraprofessionals working in translation or parental involvement activities. Additionally, paraprofessionals cannot provide any instructional service to students unless they are working under the direct supervision of fully

qualified teachers. To assure compliance, each local educational agency will require that principals annually verify in writing whether the school has met the requirements.

Another piece of federal legislation that affects nearly half of all paraeducators is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA '97; U.S. Code, Title 20, Sections 1412(a)(14) and (15) and 1413(a)(3)). Federal regulations to implement IDEA '97 were released in March 1999 (Code of Federal Regulations, Title 34, Volume 2, Parts 300 to 399). They highlight the need for state departments of education to establish standards that ensure paraeducators are appropriately trained and supervised. IDEA '97 stipulates:

> A state may allow paraprofessionals and assistants who are appropriately trained and supervised, in accordance with State law, regulations, or written policy, in meeting the requirements of this part to be used to assist in the provision of special education and related services to children with disabilities . . . (IDEA, 1997).

A goal of both ESEA and IDEA '97 is to ensure that paraeducators possess the appropriate education and ongoing professional development required by their positions. These pieces of legislation have substantial ramifications for all paraeducators. Unfortunately, there have been instances where paraeducators have been misused and left to "fend for themselves." Standards and accountability are the watchwords.

In response to the earlier federal directives, state and local education agencies have given renewed energy to designing effective paraeducator development programs. Some nationally recognized programs include:

- Washington State Paraeducator Project
- Iowa Learning Resource Network
- Wisconsin Educational Support Personnel Certificate
- Minnesota Paraprofessional Consortium
- Colorado Coalition: Colorado Paraeducator Advisory Committee

More details about these programs can be found in Part II-C and Appendix C of this report.

I-B. Why Invest in Paraeducators

While examining the role of paraeducators, imagine the following scenario. A waiting room in a medical office is full of patients. The doctor comes out and individually takes each patient's blood pressure and temperature and draws blood. You would wonder why the doctor was not using skilled physician assistants to carry out these tasks. Consider also if a surgeon needed to go to the scene of each bad car accident rather than have experienced emergency medical technicians render initial treatment before transport to a trauma center. Or ponder the consequences if an attorney needed to type his own motions, schedule deposition and meeting times, and photocopy reams of briefs. The paralegal is an essential team member of the legal

profession and the judicial system would be more clogged than it is now if not for these highly skilled legal assistants.

As extreme as these examples might be, consider the schoolteacher today who is asked to optimally and individually instruct a diverse group of students. It would be impossible for medicine or law to efficiently function without the use of highly trained paraprofessionals. In the same way, the educational profession is exploring the impact *well-trained* paraeducators can make in students' lives. Just having a warm body in the classroom is not only ineffective, but also often a distraction for the teacher who is already occupied instructing a large class. There are schools, though, that have encouraged and developed a team relationship between teachers and paraeducators. Just as the physician assistant performs various medical tests and procedures that free the physician to concentrate on those procedures that call for more skill, the paraeducator's expertise allows the teacher to expend energy on those students who require more concentrated help. They also offer additional instructional reinforcement.

Paraeducators are also valuable during teacher shortages, especially in such areas as bilingual and special education. There are many paraeducators working in these areas who are dedicated, extremely knowledgeable, and committed to their community. Some innovative programs in the country are offering these paraeducators the opportunity to become certified teachers. Linda Darling-Hammond in *How Can We Ensure A Caring, Competent, Qualified Teacher for Every Child: Strategies for Solving the Dilemmas of Teacher Supply, Demand, and Standards* notes that incentives could be provided for community college to four-year college pathways that prepare paraprofessionals for certification. She observes:

> [Paraprofessionals] often live in the communities where they work and know the students' languages and cultures. A number of successful programs now exist to help these individuals who are already committed to education complete their undergraduate education and certification requirements in a streamlined, supported fashion through pathways that take advantage of both community colleges and universities working in partnership. Studies show that such programs have a very high yield in terms of the number of participants who complete the program and enter teaching (Darling-Hammond, 1998).

School districts that have used paraeducators without proper training and supervision need to change their approach. Current and proposed legislation reflects this need. Administrators must be knowledgeable about the rules and regulations for paraeducators and the need for time to communicate and plan. Teachers should understand their role in directing the paraeducator and their ultimate legal and ethical responsibility for students' instruction. Work performed by paraeducators should augment the teacher's lessons and never be used as a substitute for instruction by the teacher.

Consider for a moment if another group of paraprofessionals, such as dental assistants, were given no support, supervision, or training. It would be no wonder that they would be identified as

the weak link in a less-than-stellar dental office. When paraeducators are asked to provide instruction to students from the first day on the job, with no orientation to their positions, it is unreasonable to expect that the results will be satisfactory. But, just as it would be detrimental to eliminate the position of a dental assistant in dentistry's professional hierarchy, to abolish the use of paraeducators would also be a loss.

Sandra Feldman, president of the American Federation of Teachers, observes that paraprofessionals are a valuable educational resource, but that some districts or schools are not meeting legal requirements for proper training and supervision of paraprofessionals:

> The solution is not to eliminate paraprofessionals; it is to require districts to train and use them properly. Title I paraprofessionals provide extra support to disadvantaged students, freeing teachers to focus intensively on instruction. Most aides live in the schools' communities and have a special understanding of students' lives and circumstances. Often they provide stable and loving relationships for children whom such relationships are rare . . . To give every child the opportunity to succeed, we must hold students and teachers to high standards, reduce class size in the early grades and ensure that schools are safe and orderly. And we must continue to allow paraprofessionals, properly trained and deployed, to support disadvantaged youngsters so that they, too, can fulfill their potential (Feldman, 1999).

It's important when evaluating the effectiveness of paraeducators that *well-trained* paraprofessionals are the subject of the research. A counterexample is a highly publicized study, "Teacher Aides and Student Learning: Lessons from Project STAR," released in 1998. This study concluded that teacher aides did not contribute to students' academic achievement in the classroom. An important question, however, is how well trained were the paraeducators in the study? One would expect to find no significant increase in student achievement if the paraprofessionals did not possess the necessary knowledge and skills to help students learn. Further, did the teachers have the expertise to effectively direct the work of paraeducators? Jeremy D. Finn, in a commissioned paper for the National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students, observed that teachers in the STAR (Student/Teacher Achievement Ratio) study classrooms "received no special instructions of any sort, and the duties of teacher aides were not prescribed but were left to the teacher's discretion." Finn notes:

> Teacher aides are a major [element in] education intervention (e.g., Title I; special education; some remedial programs). The academic value of teacher aides depends both on their qualifications to provide instruction and on how they are deployed (e.g., for order keeping, for bookkeeping, or as a true teaching resource). Research should ask whether teacher aides can be utilized to further enhance the benefits of small classes, or whether judicious use of well-prepared teacher aides in regular-size classrooms can produce some of the same benefits as small classes, but at lower cost (Finn, 1998).

Eleanor Roosevelt Elementary in Vancouver, Washington, provides a clear example of the benefits that can be gained from properly trained and supervised paraeducators. This school has earned the Distinguished Title I School award from the U.S. Department of Education. Children from Russia, Central and South America, Ukraine, Bosnia, Vietnam, Cambodia, India, Romania, China, Laos, and the Philippines attend the school. In response to a recent survey, parents said the main thing they liked was the attention, respect, and patience from the teachers for their children.

> That personal attention and patience is possible because of the school's huge pool of paraprofessionals . . . the paraprofessionals work both inside and outside the classroom. In the classroom, they give native-language assistance to keep kids on target in content areas. Outside the classroom, they work with small groups, often previewing upcoming lessons and reading stories in English, going over spelling, pronunciation, meaning, and concepts. The principal notes two keys for maximum effectiveness are to give paraprofessionals lots of training in instructional strategies and have them work closely and cooperatively with the classroom teacher. She states: 'If a teacher and a Title I paraprofessional and Title VII paraprofessional are planning together and coordinating materials and working in close proximity to the classroom, there's not a more powerful way to personalize instruction and lower that adult-to-child ratio' (Sherman, 1999).

I-C. The Current Scope of Paraeducator Employment and Training

Paraprofessionals are employed increasingly in schools. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), there were 621,385 instructional aides in fall 1999. The distribution of elementary and secondary staff for school year 1999-2000 included 11.1 percent as instructional aides.

Compared with 57 percent of teachers, 75 percent of all paraeducators work in elementary schools. Almost half of the paraprofessional workforce is hired for special education programs. It is estimated that another 15 to 18 percent work in bilingual programs. An additional 18 percent of paraeducators are employed in Title I programs working in over 70 percent of elementary schools and nearly 50 percent of middle schools throughout the country. The remainder of paraeducators is used in other school programs (Leighton, et al., 1997).

	Instructional Aides (FTE)	Instructional Aides as Percent of Total Staff	Ratio of Teachers to Instructional Aides
1969-70	57,418	1.7%	35.1 to 1
1980	325,755	7.8%	6.7 to 1
1990	395,959	8.8%	6.1 to 1
1998	587,158	10.8%	4.8 to 1
1999	621,385	11.1%	4.7 to 1

Sources: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics 1993 (Table 81), 2001 (Table 81), and 2001a.

There are a number of community college programs that have specific programs to prepare one to work as a paraeducator. In 1996-97, more than 10,000 two-year degrees were awarded by all education programs in the United States. For the same year, the number of graduates from programs designed specifically to train teacher assistants/aides was a little over 1,000 (NCES, 1997).

Joseph Johnson, Director of Compensatory Education Programs at the U.S. Department of Education, is editor of the 1999 report, *Hope for Urban Education: A Study of Nine High-Performing, High-Poverty, Urban Elementary Schools*. This report details nine urban elementary schools that served children in poor communities and achieved impressive academic results. As the executive summary states:

> . . .These schools have attained higher levels of achievement than most schools in their states or most schools in the nation. They have achieved results in reading and mathematics beyond that achieved in some suburban schools (U.S. Department of Education, 1999).

Many of the schools delineated in this report note that paraprofessionals contributed to the school's success. For example, at Burgess Elementary School in Atlanta, Georgia, the principal reports that all paraprofessionals are required to participate in content-focused workshops so that they are better prepared to assist the classroom teacher. Centerville Elementary in East St. Louis, Illinois utilizes paraprofessionals who are fully integrated into the classroom. The teachers at Hawley Environmental Elementary School in Milwaukee, Wisconsin report on the importance of the support they received from paraprofessionals who were hired in response to their request for classroom help. The main purpose has been to give teachers the extra assistance they need in the classroom so they can fully dedicate themselves to student learning. Hawley has focused on carefully selecting paraprofessionals who are well qualified and could fit in with the school's culture of teamwork and focus on student achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 1999).

II. Designing Effective Paraeducator Development Policies

II-A. Key Elements of Paraeducator Development

The common theme of all the previously mentioned legislation is to ensure that paraeducators possess the knowledge and skills to help children learn. Consistent with the goal of student learning, three components essential to effective paraeducator development have been identified:

- There must be systemic changes in the schools that recognize the need for time and support for teamwork between teachers and paraeducators.
- Teachers need to have preservice training that trains them as directors/supervisors of other adults.
- Paraeducators need to have specific training that addresses both generic and specialized content such as confidentiality, behavior management, communication, and reading and math curriculum.

The first factor, systemic recognition of the necessity for teamwork development with available time and support, is crucial. There are many schools in which paraeducators are a vital link to students achieving. Some of the conditions under which paraprofessionals can contribute to children's success is discussed in "Roles for Education Paraprofessionals in Effective Schools." Limited planning or implementation can diminish this important contribution, however. Experts cite examples such as poor screening, assignment, and supervision that place paraprofessionals in situations for which they are not trained or supported. Some districts, in an attempt to stretch shrinking budgets, may utilize paraprofessionals to do the work of certified teachers. To save money or limit turnover, paraprofessionals may be assigned to a different position for which they have received no training. Educators can improve overall school effectiveness, however, by creating appropriate roles for paraeducators, choosing qualified people for those roles, and providing the organizational and professional development needed to ensure the work can be performed well (Leighton, et al., 1997).

The second criterion for successful paraeducator development is training teachers to be directors/supervisors of other adults. Research has shown that a smaller teacher-pupil ratio results in improved student achievement. In these times of budgetary concerns, many proposals for providing more individualized instruction have been offered, including after-school and summer school programs. However, well-trained paraeducators, working under the leadership of the teacher, form a team that allows students to have more access to individualized help from a well-trained adult. Pickett advocates that the teacher is the team member who should be responsible for diagnosing student needs, planning age- and ability-appropriate lessons and instructional activities, and assessing student performance. She notes that when decisions about what to modify, when to modify, and how to modify instructional methods, curriculum content and activities are left to the discretion of the paraeducator, teachers and paraeducators are not a team with differentiated and shared responsibilities for meeting student needs. Instead, there are

frequently situations where teachers do not have a sense of responsibility for students with disabilities and other special needs. The team member with the fewest skills is then inappropriately the person with the most responsibility for determining what is best for students with the greatest needs.

The third component of effective paraeducator implementation is providing paraeducators with comprehensive training that addresses generic and specialized academic content areas. These include confidentiality and ethics, behavior management, and communication skills, as well as reading and math curriculum, respectively. Schools need to ensure that paraeducators are able to help children learn by providing ongoing professional development. Optimally, the teacher and the paraeducator should attend this inservice training together as a team.

Pickett, in "Certified Partners: Four Good Reasons for Certification of Paraprofessionals," delineates four arguments for certification. First, certification would guarantee a level of quality by setting standards and mandating specified training and experience. Second, a certification program would give paraprofessionals an opportunity for career advancement. Third, certification would provide a more definitive differentiation of responsibilities associated with proper training. Fourth, certification would give formal recognition to paraprofessionals as valued members of the education team. Necessary elements for a good certification program include a career ladder that guarantees advancement for those who meet its standards. Pickett notes "a good system will allow people to maintain rewarding jobs at different levels of responsibility" (Pickett, 1986).

Pickett observes that many stakeholders are recognizing the need for a certification and credentialing process for paraeducators. These would establish standards for the employment of paraeducators, criteria for evaluating their on-the-job performance, guidelines for career advancement, and plans for career development. Credentialing would "provide a mechanism for certifying that a paraeducator has mastered the skills required to enter a position . . ." (Pickett, 1986).

Pickett further believes that standards and infrastructures that address the roles, supervision, performance, and preparation of paraeducators need to be addressed on the state and local level. She states that the various agencies and organizations with responsibility for and an interest in improving the quality of education systems must work together to develop relevant policies, standards, and permanent infrastructures for the employment, supervision, and preparation of paraprofessionals. This includes assembling and evaluating information they can use to:

- Clearly delineate teacher and paraeducator roles;
- Determine distinctions and similarities in skills required by paraeducators to work in various programs;
- Identify the core skills required by all paraprofessionals and the hierarchy of skills required by paraeducators employed in different position levels;

- Identify curriculum content standards for comprehensive systems of paraeducator preparation that include structured on-the-job training, ongoing staff development opportunities, and access to articulated undergraduate and graduate programs that will facilitate career advancement;
- Develop credentialing systems or other mechanisms that ensure paraeducators have mastered the required skills;
- Set standards for the supervision and evaluation of paraeducator performance, as well as develop curriculum content and activities to prepare school professionals to supervise and effectively work with paraeducators (Pickett, 1986).

The employment guidelines and credentialing practices vary widely across individual districts and states. This is a reflection of the equally broad variations in guidelines and credentialing practices for teachers. (Appendix A presents the current status of states' licensing/certification standards). Rather than devising more formal credentialing systems, several states have designed administrative guidelines that regulate the education or experience needed to work as a paraprofessional.

Pickett also observes that barriers must be removed to education and training. Since paraprofessionals are not highly paid and usually have family responsibilities, they must have "access to systematic competency-based education and/or in-service training." This training would recognize training for various levels of responsibility. "Collaborative efforts among state and local education agencies, two- and four-year colleges, and professional and employee groups are needed. A comprehensive program that will enable the motivated paraprofessional to move through the permit system and follow a realistic career plan is essential." In addition, a certification system should "build on the talent that is there—opening doors, not closing them" (Pickett, 1986).

Just as various professions have clearly delineated roles and responsibilities bulwarked with standards for licensing and certification, so the work of instructing students requires formalized standards set by states or local educational agencies. In order for guidelines or standards to be meaningful, a methodology is needed to ascertain if standards are being met and if states are providing a variety of means for paraeducators to meet those standards.

Surveys and focus groups conducted by the Washington Education Association (WEA) have identified that a majority of paraeducators would support the concept of credentialing for paraeducators. The WEA identified criteria for a paraeducator-credentialing program. These include offering reduced tuition at community colleges to paraeducators participating in a statewide credentialing program for the first three years that the program is available. They also advocate providing specific standards of competency, education, in-service training, and/or experience for each level of credentialing, as well as differentiated levels of responsibility and compensation. The WEA endorses offering multiple pathways to credentialing through community college or university programs, apprenticeship programs, in-service training,

demonstration of competency, experience, or a combination of the above. In addition, recommendations include providing equitable access to training opportunities for advanced credentials across the state at convenient times and locations and at reasonable cost. This would include options such as distance learning, video courses, and training via the Internet. Local school systems, area vocational technical schools, colleges and universities, or local educational agencies could provide training. Workshops or other means should be available for ongoing professional development. Proposed as well is allocating sufficient resources from the state to school districts and training institutions to implement credentialing (Washington Education Association, 1999).

II-B. Common Failings in Paraeducator Development and Deployment

Hilton and Gerlach (1997) believe the improper use of paraeducators occurs because standards and guidelines have not been provided to districts by state agencies and professional organizations. They state:

> This problem also involves the lack of clearly defined roles for paraeducators that should come from a district's initiative demonstrated in part by developing explicit job descriptions and job definitions. The problems, however, do not end there. Most professionals . . . are not adequately trained, nor do they have proven strategies for planning, supervising and/or working with paraeducators. Similarly paraeducators are often not provided with adequate training for the responsibilities they are required to assume. Compounding these problems is the limited ability of schools to attract and maintain competent paraeducators because of low salaries, limited job security and of the lack of opportunities for advancement.

Hilton and Gerlach identify some key problems regarding paraeducators that are paraphrased below (these points are selected from a larger set of issues discussed by Hilton and Gerlach):

- Many state and local agencies have not defined the role of the paraeducator in the instructional process. Professionals and paraeducators are often frustrated concerning roles and responsibilities. Pickett and Gerlach state that professionals have the ultimate responsibility for students and that the paraeducator's role is to support and assist. Although paraeducators have been increasingly used to provide instruction and other direct services to students, their job descriptions often do not reflect this. The delineation of the roles of paraeducators needs to come from at least two sources. First, state and local agencies need to provide standards and guidelines. Second, roles need to be defined depending upon the needs of the students and teachers in specific classrooms and schools.

- Most states and local agencies do not have laws, regulations, standards, or guidelines that prevent the inappropriate use of paraeducators. Few states have a licensing or credentialing system that would provide standards for and require training of paraeducators. Lindeman and Beegle (1988) and Pickett and Gerlach (1997) point out that despite paraeducators increasingly taking on instructional roles, most state departments and local agencies have not set employment standards. When guidelines do exist, often they do not reflect the changing role of the paraeducator. Just as state agencies throughout the country have required credentialing for teachers, paraeducators, with their increasingly instructional role, require a licensing/credentialing system that ensures they are properly trained and utilized.

- Paraeducator training is often not comprehensive and competency based. Lacking also are opportunities for career advancement or professional development. Training needs to be competency based and a part of a comprehensive system of career development. Training programs should match the skills listed in job descriptions and evaluation instruments to the training components offered. Blalock (1991) has suggested that there are various methodologies for effective inservice and preservice training.

- Professionals, including teachers and administrators, are often not prepared to monitor, train and evaluate paraeducators (Lindeman and Beegle, 1988; Pickett and Gerlach, 1997). Paraeducators should carry out activities under the direction and supervision of a trained professional (Pickett and Gerlach, 1997). In addition to directing the work of the paraeducator, the supervising professional becomes the primary trainer of the paraeducator (Pickett and Gerlach, 1997). These skills require the ability to communicate effectively and develop a team relationship. These are skills that should be part of all beginning educational professionals' preservice and inservice training. This would help teachers to more effectively use paraeducators (Hilton and Gerlach, 1997).

In "Roles for Education Paraprofessionals in Effective Schools," it is maintained that paraprofessionals' work will only have the intended impact if the curriculum and instruction engage students in challenging content. Research by Teddlie and Stringfield (1993) and the U.S. Department of Education (1987) demonstrated that several factors are consistently identified in effective schools. A key component is providing high-quality lessons that engage students in cognitive activities that lead to learning (Tomlinson, 1990). Other ingredients that significantly contribute to effectiveness are safety and order, clear academic focus, frequent monitoring of student progress, instructional leadership, high expectations, and good home/school relationships

(Leighton, et al., 1997).

An Internet report, "ESP Working Together to Improve Schools," discusses high-reliability organizations. Imagine if all schools viewed themselves as an aircraft carrier. Airplanes on these ships almost always land safely even though the runway is small, the airplane is traveling at fast

speeds, and the technology is complex. How can something so risky have such a high rate of success? The answer is teamwork among people with tremendously different roles, expertise, and training. The team is composed of the young recruit, who inspects the deck to ensure it's debris-free, up to the flight commander with years of experience and specialized training. Any member of the team, however, has the authority to veto a landing. Each member takes the personal responsibility for safe airplane landings, and each respects the others' opinions. This arrangement ensures that aircraft carriers employ high-reliability organization; success is the only acceptable outcome.

Dr. Sam Stringfield observes that in high-reliability schools all staff members strive to prevent avoidable student failures. The first line of prevention is the academic program. In addition, paraeducators provide a safety net for students by using their special skills and insights. In high-reliability schools, paraeducators join teachers, administrators and others as viewing every failing student as a catastrophe. They work together as a team to help each child to succeed. Stringfield states that when assessing whether paraprofessionals can help, there are three factors that require reflection:

- Do curriculum and instruction engage students in hard work on challenging content?
- Do staff members, in their individual and collective work, recognize their own contributions and those of others in promoting student achievement? Also, do they continuously gather evidence about the effects of their own performance?
- Do school policy and practice communicate a clear commitment to ensuring every student's success and to avoiding preventable failures?

Educational decision-makers, Stringfield stresses, therefore need to assess: (1) the adequacy of curriculum and instruction; (2) the extent of organizational engagement; (3) the level of staff commitment to every student's success (National Education Association, 1999).

II-C. Models for Effective Paraeducator Development Policies

Washington's focused approach to paraeducator competency.

Washington State has developed 14 Core Competencies for Paraeducators, various training and delivery models statewide and a tracking system for local and personnel record keeping. The core competencies were rigorously developed by numerous stakeholder groups, including personnel and special education directors throughout the state, general and special education teachers, paraeducators, parent groups, higher education, and the four major unions representing classified staff. The core competencies have been accepted by the office of Superintendent Public Instruction/Special Education with performance indicators for each competency to be used as guidelines for district implementation.

Training for each of the competencies as well as special health care training has been developed and disseminated throughout the state by the nine educational service districts. ESDs deliver training, foster communication and provide district support to LEAs concerning the core competencies and district implementation. Information about these trainings and other topics that address paraeducators are linked by a statewide Web site with information about each ESD, training opportunities and resources for staff. Work is under way to develop alternative delivery models of instruction especially for paraeducators across the state in rural and remote areas using videos and on-line training through community colleges.

The Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges Skill Standards Project has developed skill standards for paraeducators in three different job families. This work defines the roles, responsibilities, and training requirements for paraeducators in Washington State. Each of the skill standards are based on and relate directly to one or more of the 14 core competencies and provide for clear statewide articulation.

Local school districts and bargaining units are currently being updated and trained in possible implementation questions and issues. Many districts are currently addressing other areas of the system that might be impacted by the implementation of the core competencies (WEA Paraeducator Project, 1999).

The Iowa model for state policy on paraeducator development

Iowa developed guidelines for effective paraeducator development that were adapted in part from Washington and Utah draft guidelines. The 1998 booklet, "Guide for Effective Paraeducator Practices in Iowa," is available from the Iowa Department of Education. It presents a foundation for systematic paraeducator development that could serve as a model for states or local educational agencies. The guidelines enumerated in Figure 1 were designed as a tool to assist in developing and adopting standards for effective paraeducator practices. They were formulated based on belief and vision statements developed by a constituency of paraeducators, teachers, parents, and administrators from local and area educational agencies, community colleges, and the Iowa Department of Education.

The core competencies for paraeducators listed in Figure 2 give a greater sense of the richness of the content in Iowa's guidelines. The Iowa guidebook also includes core competencies for three specific types of paraeducators, possible training topics, a suggested code of ethics, examples of paraeducator duties, and an extensive outline of the federal mandates related to paraeducators. (Iowa Department of Education, 1998).

Iowa currently is working on issues regarding the implementation of paraeducator licensing. There presently is a proposal to change the word "licensed" paraeducator to "certified" paraeducator. As Iowa works through this process, state law mandates paraprofessional training. Proposed training for paraeducators will include 45 hours of instruction in the following areas:

- Behavior management
- Ethical responsibilities and behavior
- Exceptional child and at-risk child behavior
- Collaboration skills and interpersonal relations
- Child and youth development

The Iowa guidelines exemplify an important step in formulating a coordinated state policy for paraeducator development. A related and equally pivotal element, establishing career ladders for paraprofessionals, involves institutions of higher education.

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Figure 1. Iowa's Suggested Guidelines for Effective Paraeducator Services

- *Guideline 1: The Paraeducator and the Instructional Team*
  Paraeducators are respected and supported as team members responsible for assisting licensed staff in the delivery of instruction, support, and related services.

- *Guideline 2: Role Clarification*
  The entire instructional team participates within clearly defined roles to provide an appropriate educational program for children and youth.

- *Guideline 3: Supervision*
  Paraeducators receive appropriate supervision to ensure the delivery of effective educational services to children and youth.

- *Guideline 4: Staff Development of Paraeducators*
  To ensure quality education for children and youth and appropriate safety for children, youth, and staff, paraeducators are provided with an agency orientation and ongoing staff development commensurate with their responsibilities.

- *Guideline 5: Staff Development of Licensed Staff in Supervisory Roles*
  Licensed staff is sufficiently trained in supervisory skills to work with paraeducators.

- *Guideline 6: Administrator Support*
  Administrators provide support for effective paraeducator services.

- *Guideline 7: Ethical Responsibilities*
  Paraeducators and licensed staff consistently practice ethical behaviors required of their position.

- *Guideline 8: Policies and Procedures*
  Policies and procedures recognize and support paraeducators as an integral partner in providing educational services.

- *Guideline 9: Career Opportunities and Compensation*
  Paraeducators are provided with opportunities for advancement and adequate compensation

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These guidelines are found in "Guide for Effective Paraeducator Practices in Iowa" (Iowa Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education, 1998). The source includes several "examples of implementation" for each of the nine guidelines and a section on involving institutions of higher education.

Figure 2. Iowa's Core Competencies for All Paraeducators

To assist in education and related services for children and youth, paraeducators will demonstrate:

- An understanding of the value of serving children and youth with disabilities and other special needs in integrated settings;
- An understanding of differentiated staffing patterns and the distinctions among the roles and responsibilities of professional and paraeducator personnel;
- An ability to communicate with colleagues, follow instructions and use problem-solving and other skills that will enable them to work as effective members of the instructional team;
- A general knowledge of the legal and human rights of children and youth and their families;
- An ability to practice ethical and professional standards of conduct established by the agency where they are employed;
- A sensitivity to diversity in cultural heritage, lifestyles, and value systems among the children, youth and families they serve;
- A general knowledge of
  Patterns of human development and milestones typically achieved at different ages; and
  Risk factors that may prohibit or impede typical development;
- An ability to motivate and assist children and youth to
  Build self-esteem,
  Develop interpersonal skills that will help them avoid isolation in different learning and living environments, and
  Strengthen skills to become more independent by monitoring and controlling their behavior;
- An ability to follow health, safety and emergency procedures developed by the agency where they are employed;
- An ability to use assistive technology and adaptive management, and provide special care or physical assistance that infants, children and /or youth may require (e.g., positioning, transferring, and feeding).

Source: These guidelines are found in Appendix D of "Guide for Effective Paraeducator Practices in Iowa" (Iowa Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education, 1998). This Appendix also includes additional competencies for each of three specific areas of paraeducator practice.

Clark College and Washington State University

Clark College in Vancouver, Washington offers an example of a curriculum that leads to paraprofessional certification. This well-developed and rigorous program is called the Collaborative Teacher Education Program (CTEP). The curriculum is comprised of general education and specialized professional courses in association with appropriate practicum experiences. The inservice experience of all paraprofessionals is under the supervision of certified teachers. The paraeducators know exactly what to do and the parameters for their role in instruction and decisionmaking. For example, they are not responsible for making decisions on what to test or instruct. Those currently working as a paraprofessional, as well as those who want to enter the field, can earn a paraprofessional certificate. This basic certificate signifies proficiency in a core education foundation in addition to content knowledge and skills. The paraprofessional curriculum forms the foundation for the basic requirement of the program. With a different pathway, an associate degree may be earned. The training not only prepares those paraeducators who wish to remain in that career, but the credits are also transferable for those who want to complete a teacher education degree. There are therefore three pathways. This seamless model allows those paraeducators who choose to attend the neighboring Washington State University (WSU) to pursue their teaching degree. Three other community colleges in Washington are using Clark College as a model for their paraeducator training.

Washington State University also has a bilingual teacher education program, the Bilingual/ESL Teacher Advancement Program (BETAP), for currently employed paraeducators to become certified teachers. In Vancouver, Washington, for example, the number of immigrant students with limited English skills has grown 12 percent a year for the past five years. The shortage of bilingual teachers has motivated schools to hire bilingual classroom assistants to translate lessons and answer questions. Most of the assistants are immigrants who are fluent in two languages and two cultures. The goal is to support the new immigrant students in their native language until they can learn English.

BETAP is federally funded through the U.S. Department of Education. It aims to add at least 35 bilingual teachers into Southwest Washington in the next five years, and over time, include many more. WSU has formed a new partnership with Clark and Lower Columbia Community Colleges and five local school districts with the goal of alleviating the shortage. Once the assistants have completed the two-year program, they will transfer to WSU where they will complete their bachelor's degree in education with an endorsement in bilingual education. Those bilingual assistants who already have a B.A., but no teaching credential, will attend WSU's teaching program for a master's degree. Twenty students, all bilingual classroom assistants, have begun the required class work. The program pays for the assistants to attend college and earn teaching credentials. Along with the free tuition, the assistants will work fewer hours at the school jobs and receive help with some other college expenses. As WSU Vancouver Associate Professor Gisela Ernst-Slavit, who directs BETAP, states: "Here we have people who have an extreme gift.

They are not only bilingual; they are bicultural. They understand the challenges for people who come from a different culture."

II-D. Evaluating the Effectiveness of Paraeducator Training

What would a possible assessment for paraeducators look like? Pickett has stated that by setting standards and mandating specific levels of training and performance, certification would ensure that paraeducators have the knowledge and skills required to perform their assigned duties.

In order for guidelines or standards to be meaningful, a methodology is needed to ascertain if standards are being met and whether states are providing a variety of means for paraeducators to obtain standards. In 1997, the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals (NRCP) was funded by the Division of Personnel Preparation in the Office of Special Education Programs to carry out a Project of National Significance. This project will provide unions, parents, and other stakeholders with resources they can build on to support and sustain efforts to: (1) address policy questions and systematic issues connected with deployment, preparation and management of paraeducators; and (2) strengthen partnerships among different constituencies with responsibility for and concern about improving the performance and status of a skilled paraeducator workforce. A national advisory panel representing administrators in state and local agencies, early childhood specialists, parents, paraeducators, personnel developers in two-and four-year colleges, unions, and professional organization representatives was formed. This group assisted in the development of proposed standards for paraeducator roles, distinctions in teacher and paraeducator scopes of responsibility, and the knowledge base and skills required by teachers and paraeducators to carry out their responsibility as member of program implementation teams. After the development of the above information, a nationwide survey representing various stakeholder agencies and organizations was conducted to validate the proposed standards and guidelines. Based on these findings, the advisory panel assisted in:

- Developing parameters for scopes of responsibilities for teachers and paraeducators;
- Defining a common core of competencies required by all paraeducators, and the hierarchy of skills and knowledge required by paraeducators working in positions and programs requiring more advanced skills; and
- Developing the supervisory skills needed by teachers to plan for, direct, and monitor paraeducator activities.

The report, entitled *Strengthening and Supporting Teacher/Provider-Paraeducator Teams: Guidelines for Paraeducator Roles, Supervision, and Preparation* delineates responsibilities,

skills and knowledge required for both teachers and paraeducators. Recommendations for improving the instructional teams' productivity and effectiveness are also included. For more information, please contact:

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One of the National Task Force's conclusions states that there needs to be a differentiation made between various types of paraeducators. Just as the nursing assistant may have specialization in orthopedic, psychiatric, or obstetric nursing, the paraeducator may have focused training in particular areas. In other words, as Pickett has noted: "A paraeducator is not a paraeducator is not a paraeducator." While there should be a core set of knowledge for all paraeducators, specific roles require specific training. For example, the paraeducator who is assigned to care for a student requiring gastric intubation and breathing tube suctioning needs to have explicit instruction in these skills. As one can ascertain, there is specific knowledge that paraeducators assigned to a special needs student might need that paraeducators working with reading students would not require. Clear delineation of roles and responsibilities for all paraeducators, as well as for specialized paraeducators, addresses these needs.

As states and local educational agencies seek to form an assessment tool to effectively evaluate paraeducators, the knowledge and skills delineated in *Strengthening and Supporting Teacher/Provider-Paraeducator Teams: Guidelines for Paraeducator Roles, Supervision, and Preparation* will be invaluable. There are clear elements necessary for the general paraeducator and more specific attributes required for those paraeducators who specialize in a particular field. The various levels of paraeducators reflect the prerequisite knowledge and skills mandated for a specific designation. For example, an entry level paraeducator needs to possess common core concepts. At the second level, specialized core concepts are mandated. The third level entails obtaining advanced competencies.

Recognition for training by increased wages will provide an incentive for advancing on a career ladder as well as lessen attrition. Paraeducators are professionals and require an orientation handbook, job description, role and expectations, standards, and a code of conduct. The National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals has enumerated steps for a career ladder. They include:

- Experiential and educational requirements for entry-level positions
- Distinctions in roles and duties for different levels of paraeducator positions
- Skills/knowledge required for advancement
- Standards for staff development, including:
- Systematic on-the-job coaching
- Structured on-going inservice
- Opportunities for advancement to professional ranks based on career preference

There is support for standards by professional education organizations. The National Education Association (NEA) advocates to: "Establish appropriate certification standards for Title I paraeducators, integrate paraeducator and teacher training, and provide sufficient federal resources to enable schools to provide necessary and appropriate paraeducator training" (NEA, 1999). The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) asserts: "We must define the role and responsibilities of instructional paraprofessionals; set criteria for basic skills required for entry into the profession; specify appropriate pre- and inservice training; and identify advanced skills for permanent certification" (AFT, 1999).

CONCLUSION

Paraeducators truly are a potential gold mine and can offer tremendous benefits for children. It is worth the effort to provide them with the best training and support possible. Paraeducators offer instructional reinforcement that enhances every student's opportunity to learn to read, meet standards, and achieve academic success. Paraeducators often have the ability to develop a relationship with those students who otherwise may get lost in the classroom. Research has shown that one adult can make all the difference in the world to a child. As Pickett and Gerlach emphasize in "Supervising Paraeducators in School Settings: A Team Approach":

> It is important that the contributions paraeducators . . . make to improving the quality and productivity of education and related services not be overlooked; and that standards for their employment, roles, supervision, and preparation be established and opportunities for staff development and professional growth be institutionalized (Pickett and Gerlach, 1997).

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APPENDIX A: EXISTING OR PROPOSED STATE PARAEDUCATOR CERTIFICATION POLICIES

Alabama	Letter of approval. Required. 30 hours of formal training; permanent.
Delaware	Permit with requirements not specified; must have evaluated experience and training and skills relevant to the position; permanent
Florida	Legislation outlining career ladder with LEA option (not mandatory) passed in 1998. Current regulations specify standards and procedures that apply to teacher aides, including health, age, knowledge of policies & instructional practices.
Georgia	State license requires two years of college or 50 hours; renewable every three years, requiring additional 50 hours instruction or in-service
Idaho	Special education – state standards for knowledge and performance. Recommendations for orientation and training in first year of employment.
Illinois	State certificate requires completion of a teacher aide training program approved by the superintendent or 30 semester hours; permanent. Legislation pending for revision and creation of task force to study issue
Indiana	Special education-appropriately trained paraprofessionals may work under the direction of a teacher or related services personnel. Public agencies must provide preservice and inservice training.
Iowa	New hires must complete inservice in first year of employment. LEAs must have staff development plan that includes paraeducators. Special education-preservice and inservice requirements. Certificate-granted to those who complete a recognized paraeducator preparation program with 90 clock hours of training.
Kansas	State permit-special education only. Effective May 2000 no longer in state regulations but districts must follow these standards in order to receive state reimbursement of approx. $8,000 per special education paraprofessional. Level 1—20 hours, renewable every year. Level 2—30 semester hours & 450 hours inservice & 2 years experience at level 1; renew every 3 years. Level 3—60 semester hours or AA degree & 900 hours inservice & 3 years at Level 2; renew every 3 years.
Maine	Education technician/level I—high school diploma, orientation, ongoing inservice. Education technician/level II—2 years college & inservice. Education technician/level III—3 years college & inservice. All are renewed yearly.
Maryland	State task force report recommending licensure standards presented to state Legislature in 1998; no LEA mandate. 2001-development of state regulations in progress.
Minnesota	Minnesota Omnibus Education Bill of 1998 requires school boards in districts where paraprofessionals are employed in programs for students with disabilities to ensure that: Paraprofessionals have sufficient knowledge and skills in various areas, annual training opportunities to further develop knowledge and skills, and ongoing direction of their work by a licensed teacher, and where appropriate and possible, the supervision of a school nurse.
Mississippi	Assistant teacher; complete the reading, language arts & math portions of a current national normed eighth grade standardized achievement test (exempt if holding a teaching certificate). HS diploma or GED; participate in annual training provided by the district.

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Missouri	State requirement for instructional aides only of 60 hours college; renewed yearly.
New Hampshire	State Certificate. HS diploma, 1 year experience; complete a 2-week orientation session on special education. Certified paraprofessionals must complete 50 hours in areas determined by the professional development master plan for their district.
New Jersey	Paraprofessional positions are approved by the county superintendent of schools who must develop job descriptions and standards for appointment.
New Mexico	State requirement that paraprofessional must complete a training program designed by local school district. Training varies according to district and how they use paraprofessionals
New York	State Certified. Teacher aide: must fulfill civil service requirements; responsibilities are non-teaching. Teaching assistant--temporary license: HS diploma; responsibilities are instructional in nature. Teaching assistant—continuing certificate: 6 hours of collegiate study; one year of experience; responsibilities are instructional in nature. Teaching assistant—level I: HS diploma; satisfactory level of performance on the New York State Teacher Certification Examination Test. Teaching assistant—level II: all requirement of level I plus 6 hours of collegiate study Teacher assistant-level III: all requirements of level II plus 18 hours of collegiate study. Teaching assistant-paraprofessional certificate: all requirements of level III plus must be matriculated in a program registered as leading to teacher certification.
Ohio	State Permit. Education Aide needs skills sufficient to do the job, one-year permit. Education Assistant—high school diploma and participation in unspecified in-service training under a one year permit; renewed every four years
Oklahoma	Legislation passed 1999/in process at state Department of Education
Oregon	Under discussion at Department of Education
Pennsylvania	State Certified (private schools only)
Rhode Island	State requirement. High school diploma; training at discretion of district (Rhode Island Federation of Teachers is working to revise)
South Carolina	HS diploma; participation in preservice and inservice training programs for aides.
Texas	State Certified. Education Aide—high school diploma and experience working with children; Education Aide II—15 hours college or demonstrated proficiency; Education Aide III—30 hours college and three years as Aide I or II. Legislation introduced for revision, 1999.
Utah	Standards for special education paraeducators were developed and approved by state board in May 1995. Collaboration with the state office of education, school districts, and 2 and 4-year institutes created 2-year associate degree programs for paraeducator development that is articulated to 4-year special education and elementary education teacher preparation programs.
Vermont	Level I—6 hours college, renewed yearly. Level II—30 hours college & 1 year experience, renewed every 2 years. Level III-60 hours college & 2 years experience, renewed every 3 years. Level IV-90 hours college, renew every 4 years. Personnel standards for paraprofessionals will be included in special education rules in 2002.
Washington	Current system defined but not mandatory
Wisconsin	Special education only. Three years college or 3 years supervising youth activities or some combination that can include 2 years at voc-tech school specializing in childcare, renewed every 5 years.

Source: Adapted from a table on the American Federation of Teachers web site http://www.aft.org/psrp/certification/status.html, retrieved 1/10/02 with additional updates.

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APPENDIX B: A HISTORY OF PARAEDUCATOR PROGRAMS

An historical review of paraprofessionals will facilitate an understanding of this profession as found in *Supervising Paraeducators in School Settings: A Team Approach* (Pickett and Gerlach, eds., 1997). Anna Lou Pickett is the director of the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services (NRCP). In a chapter entitled, "Paraeducators in School Settings: Framing the Issues," she explains that the use of paraprofessionals had its roots in the social and political history of the 20th century. Paraprofessional auxiliary workers were first utilized in the early 1900s in the settlement house movement at Henry Street in New York and Hull House in Chicago. Later "nonprofessional" workers were used to provide services in various New Deal programs, including the Social Security Act of 1935, the Works Progress Administration, and the National Youth Administration. During the years of World War II in the 1940s, little consideration was given to retaining and enhancing the status of those workers.

The 1950s brought recognition to the contributions paraprofessionals could make in schools. Local school boards were facing a post-World War II shortage of teachers and attempting to find alternative resources to provide education services. The Ford Foundation in Bay City, Michigan supported one program started during this time. The school district recruited and trained uncredentialed, college-educated teachers aides to perform clerical, monitoring, and other administrative tasks. The goal was to allow teachers to have more instructional time available. An experiment by two researchers at Syracuse University demonstrated the efficacy of teacher aides working alongside special education instructors.

During the 1960s and 1970s major changes occurred as the role of government increased in expanding and improving education and other services. Under the leadership of President Johnson, a war on poverty was declared and programs such as Title I and Head Start were established to augment the educational and support services for disadvantaged children. In 1975 the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was passed that required schools to provide free and appropriate education for all children and youth with disabilities. It was reauthorized in 1990 and is now called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Bowman and Klopf (1967, 1968) reported on two studies conducted by the Bank Street School of Education, which identified the positive effects of teacher aides in the classroom. Teachers were able to more fully focus on student instruction. Time was available for more individualized student instruction, cooperative planning and learning opportunities for students, attention to students' personal and social needs and for innovation in teaching.

A study by Gartner and Riessman (1974) reported on other factors that increased the utilization of paraprofessionals. Policymakers and parents were concerned whether traditional education systems made up of predominantly white, middle class teachers and administrators were able to meet the needs of ethnic, language minority, and economically and educationally disadvantaged students. Recruitment of local workers was instigated to lessen the gap between schools and

communities in both urban and rural areas. These employees understood the community's cultural and ethnic heritages and assisted in communication between students and parents.

The position of a teacher's aide changed from being strictly clerical to serving as a liaison between the school and community, tutoring individual and small groups of students, or providing other direct and indirect services in the school. These paraprofessionals, unlike those in earlier programs who usually were white with some college training, were Black, Latino, or Native American. Many saw their position as an opportunity to gain experience and eventually earn a teaching degree (Gartner and Riessman, 1974; Kaplan, 1977).

As the employment of paraprofessionals increased, there was a growing awareness of the need to reduce barriers that prevented ethnic and language minority population, young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and women from entering professional fields. Arthur Pearl and Frank Riessman outlined program development ideas for higher education that would encourage paraprofessionals to enter the professional fields. They called this movement New Careers. During the 1960s and 1970s, career development efforts were based on several assumptions. These included:

- The availability and quality of personnel in education and health and social services could be increased by the use of paraprofessionals.
- Various disciplines can have differentiated tasks performed by a range of personnel, some of whom are certificated/licensed professionals and others that can be shared or performed by paraprofessionals.
- People who are underrepresented in the professional fields could have improved opportunity for career advancement by increasing access to higher education to those who need to work at the same time (Cohen, 1976; Gartner and Riessmann, 1974; Kaplan, 1977).

In the early 1970s, the federal government helped expand the New Careers Movement through legislative actions, funding, and administrative guidelines. For example, in 1970 the U.S. Department of Education established the Career Opportunities Program (COP). The mission of COP was to provide opportunities for teacher aides in low-income urban and rural areas to have access to educational opportunities and ultimately improve children's learning. A creative aspect of COP was that the programs were cooperatively developed by schools and college and university teacher education programs to help committed and talented paraprofessionals become certified teachers. The schools first selected the paraprofessionals to be trained and identified the skills they would need to be effective teachers. The institutes of higher education then adapted their programs to meet the paraprofessionals' needs. Specifically, required courses were held at night, financial assistance and tutoring were provided, and classes were taught near students' homes. Haselkorn and Fideler (1996) point out that COP is a program whose developed and tested strategies are extremely relevant today. In their book, *Breaking the Class Ceiling: Paraeducator Pathways to Teaching*, they recount reemerging efforts between schools and institutes of higher education to recruit and support paraeducator career development.

At the same time that higher education was examining ways to recruit and support paraprofessionals, some states began to develop guidelines for the employment and preparation of paraprofessionals. While a few of these states had criteria for career advancement, most did not. Rather than develop regulatory procedures, these states established administrative guidelines that listed appropriate responsibilities for paraprofessionals. A number of school districts devised paraprofessional job descriptions and offered training for those staff whose career choice was to remain a paraprofessional.

The 1980s found support for all education programs declining. Interest in paraprofessional standards and networks for paraprofessional development diminished. During this time, policies and administrative guidelines for employment, roles, placement, supervision, and preparation of paraprofessionals became more unstructured.

The 1990s brought a resurgence of interest in paraprofessionals. New laws in the late 1980s and early 1990s increased demands for highly skilled personnel at all levels. For example the Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments of 1986 required public schools to provide services to children ages three through five who have disabilities or chronic health needs that place them at risk. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that schools serve all its students in the least restrictive environment and provide transition and vocational education opportunities to teenagers. Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1994 offered guidelines for the use of teacher aides/assistants. Title I funding traditionally has been used to provide reading and mathematics instruction to students whose achievement did not meet performance expectations.

Prior to the 1988 reauthorization of ESEA, Title I was generally a pull-out remedial program that took students out of their regular classes for part of the day. However, beginning in 1988, more emphasis was placed on teaching advanced skills and having the same expectations for all students. By 1994, the legislation placed even greater stress on standards and on using Title I to support all children in achieving to state content standards, with aligned assessment systems. Title II of ESEA enabled school districts to use funds for paraprofessional and teacher development in helping students achieve performance standards. Title II also allows local education agencies to use funds to develop career ladders for those paraprofessionals who would like to become certified teachers. Title VII of ESEA contains provisions that support the employment and professional development of those paraprofessionals working with linguistic-minority students. Goals 2000: Educate America Act of 1994 called upon states to set professional development standards for all school personnel (Pickett and Gerlach, 1997).

The latest changes in federal policy regarding paraeducators are discussed in the "Background" section of this policy paper (see page 2).

APPENDIX C: HIGHLIGHTS OF OTHER PARAEDUCATOR TRAINING INITIATIVES

Washington State Core Competencies for Paraeducators

Definitions:

- Awareness--knowing or realization; a simple recognition
- Knowledge—acknowledgement; familiarity; acquaintance with facts; being informed
- Understanding—having a clear perception of the meaning
- Ability—able to apply or demonstrate

Performance indicators beneath each core competency are to be used only as a guideline for meeting the core competencies.

To work in education and related services programs for children and youth with disabilities, paraeducators will demonstrate:

1. Understanding the value of providing instructional and other direct services to all children and youth with disabilities:

    - Awareness of historical perspective of students with disabilities, including IDEA, 504, ADA; value and benefit to schools, staff, students and general community; modeling an integrated community
    - Knowledge of the purpose of special education programs and education for students with disabilities
    - Understanding of the philosophy that all students can learn and contribute

2. Understanding the roles and responsibilities of certificated/licensed staff and paraeducators:

    - Knowledge of certificated /licensed staff roles and responsibilities for program development, evaluation, and for instructional supervision of paraeducators, including legal requirements and district policies and procedures
    - Understanding of district chain of command and paraeducator role in relation to other school employees
    - Understanding of the value of paraeducators in educational programs
    - Understanding of paraeducator roles and responsibilities, including legal requirements and district policies and procedures

- Understanding of shared roles and responsibilities, including teaming and collaboration
- Understanding how to do self evaluation and/or reflection as it applies to the paraeducator role

3. Knowledge of patterns of human development and milestones typically achieved at different ages, and risk factors that may prohibit or impede typical development:

   - Awareness of learning theory and different approaches certificated staff may use
   - Awareness of and respect for the impact on families having children with disabilities
   - Knowledge of the developmental continuum from birth to 21 years in the following areas: communication, self help, physical development, and social/emotional and cognitive development
   - Knowledge of and respect for the influence that families have on student learning and development
   - Knowledge of issues and requirements surrounding transitions for students and families

4. Ability to practice ethical and professional standards of conduct, including the requirements of confidentiality:

   - Ability to comply with the requirements of confidentiality for educational and medical records
   - Ability to comply with legal requirements regarding the reporting of abuse, discipline, and inappropriate conduct, such as touching
   - Ability to comply with district policies and procedures regarding delegation and supervision, and issues of insubordination

5. Ability to communicate with colleagues, follow instructions, and use problem-solving and other skills that will enable the paraeducator to work as an effective member of the instructional team:

   - Ability to use communication methods to increase understanding
   - Ability to use techniques/strategies for problem solving and negotiation
   - Ability to recognize learning and communication styles
   - Ability to do self-evaluation and reflection as it pertains to working as an effective member of the instructional team
   - Ability to advocate for oneself

6. Ability to provide positive behavioral support and management:

- Understanding of the use of crisis intervention and restraint techniques
- Understanding of how disabilities can impact on behavior
- Understanding of the legal requirements and district policies and procedures for discipline
- Ability to promote the development of social skills
- Ability to use prevention and intervention skills
- Ability to use reinforcement strategies
- Ability to use data collection and observation techniques

7. Knowledge of the legal issues related to the education of children and youth with disabilities and their families:

- Knowledge of the intent of IDEA, including historical perspective, impact of legal decisions, and value of legislation
- Knowledge of IDEA - parts B and C, ADA and 504.
- Knowledge of definitions, such as LRE, IEP, 504, written plans, and the implications for paraeducators in relation to legal requirements and district policies and procedures and contract provisions
- Knowledge of Washington's special education requirements in general terms including definitions, qualifications, and service options

8. Awareness of diversity among the children, youth, families, and colleagues with whom they work:

- Awareness of how the different aspects of diversity enhance opportunities for learning
- Awareness of cultural biases and personal differences that affect working with students, families, and other team members

9. Knowledge and application of the elements of effective instruction to assist teaching and learning as developed by the certificated/licensed staff in a variety of settings:

- Ability to use reinforcement strategies
- Ability to use instructional techniques
- Ability to use data collection and observation techniques

10. Ability to utilize appropriate strategies and techniques to provide instructional support in teaching and learning as developed by the certificated/licensed staff:

- Ability to apply small group instructional techniques for management and support of student learning
- Ability to apply specific instructional techniques to support academic areas
- Ability to apply techniques that support instruction in academic areas

11. Ability to motivate and assist children and youth:

- Ability to use appropriate interest and ability level material, and to modify materials as necessary
- Ability to use appropriate reinforcement strategies

12. Knowledge of and ability to follow health, safety, and emergency procedures of the agency where they are employed:

- Understanding of district policies and procedures, contract provisions contract and state requirements
- Understanding of the legal requirements of delegation and supervision
- Understanding of the legal requirements and district policies and procedures for chain of command
- Ability to perform basic first aid
- Ability to use infection control and universal precautions
- Ability to use lifting, carrying, and transferring techniques

13. Awareness of the ways in which technology can assist teaching and learning:

- Awareness of assistive communication
- Awareness of technological equipment

14. Awareness of personal care and/or health-related support:

- Awareness of district polices and procedures, and the legal requirements for delegation, training and supervision, and the issues of insubordination.
- Awareness of legal requirements for providing health-related care in the schools
- Awareness of types of personal care and health-related support tasks

For more information contact:

Washington Education Association
33434 8th Ave S.
Federal Way, Washington 98003

Wisconsin Educational Support Personnel (ESP) Certificate

Another certificate program for paraeducators has been developed by Wisconsin Education Association Professional Development Academy in collaboration with members of the University of Wisconsin system. The Educational Support Personnel Certificate Program consists of 40 hours of structured learning consisting of workshops, classes, or conferences. Sessions must be pre-approved and evaluated for content and quality. Universities, technical colleges, school districts, local educational associations, professional organizations or private vendors offer the actual instruction. The Professional Development Academy does not offer or hold the classes itself, but instead administers the program and serves as a clearinghouse for classes. It also maintains records and an updated listing of approved classes. It assists in the development and quality control of the classes and issues the Educational Support Personnel Certificate. The program goals include:

- Increase the attention to ESP needs for professional development
- Raise the level of professionalism for ESP
- Develop a broad curriculum so that completion of the program assures additional and significant knowledge and skills related to an individual's job and school organization
- Assure quality and applicability through a pre-approval process
- Assure statewide availability of offerings
- Award the ESP Certificate upon completion of a basic course of study

ESP core curriculum categories include communication, legal/ethical information, behavior management, and growth and development. The elective curriculum categories include cultural diversity/equity, medical/health, nutrition, hazardous materials, instructional issues, technology, special needs students, safety, work environment/school organization, and transitional services/ school-to-work (Professional Development Academy, 1997).

Minnesota Paraprofessional Consortium

The Minnesota Paraprofessional Consortium has been in existence for 10 years and consists of about 40 individuals, including teachers and paraprofessionals from local school districts as well as representatives from state agencies, unions, and institutions of higher learning. Guidance has been provided to a variety of activities designed to support and enhance Minnesota's paraprofessional workforce. One of Minnesota's goals is to establish a certificate and degree track, known as the Community Supports Program. The program would include Minnesota state

colleges and universities, as well as technical schools and community colleges (Minnesota Paraprofessional Consortium, 1998). For more information, please contact:

Teri Wallace, Co-Director
National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals
University of Minnesota
111 Pattee Hall
150 Pillsbury Drive SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Colorado Coalition: Colorado Paraeducator Advisory Committee

The Colorado Department of Education sponsored the Colorado Paraeducator Advisory Committee to develop and recommend core competencies for the hiring and training of paraeducators. The Committee identified the following skills as essential for paraeducator effectiveness:

- Professionalism and awareness of ethical practices
- Knowledge of instructional content and practice
- Ability to support the learning environment
- Ability to communicate in collaborative partnerships

Minimum competencies and best practices were then delineated for these four major areas. The possibilities of obtaining these skills through either inservice training or community college coursework were also presented.

The Colorado Coalition: Training Opportunities for Paraeducators (CO-TOP) consists of several federally funded projects that provide a statewide model for paraprofessional training in both special education and bilingual/ESL education. Research-based principles that form the foundation of the model include:

- Inservice training for paraeducators occurs best locally (French and Cabell, 1993).
- School professionals are not currently well prepared to supervise or train paraeducators (French and Pickett, 1997; Vasa et al., 1982).
- Experienced, well-educated school professionals are readily available human resources and, given the proper preparation, would be well-suited and capable of providing training to paraeducators locally.
- Paraeducator inservice training curriculum should be data-based, modular, relevant, and practical.
- Coalitions of districts and agencies can solve problems and accomplish goals that are not easily accomplished singly.

The features of the CO-TOP model address these issues by:

- Training of Trainers Model allows districts to develop a local cadre of trainers through whom they can provide inservice training according to local needs, preferences, and schedules (with or without external funding).

- Paraeducator Supervision Academy (PSA) provides specific skill building in supervision components (first step to becoming trainers).

- Trainers of Paraeducators Academy (TOPA) builds local trainers' skills for teaching adults and provides them with curricular materials.

- CO-TOP Academies (courses), which are divided into modules and based on empirical evidence of paraeducator needs (needs assessments, studies of paraeducator duties), have been field-tested and found relevant and practical.

- CO-TOP establishes, in each state, a coalition of stakeholders to address problems associated with paraeducator training.

Data show that CO-TOP training leads to:

- More effective job performance by paraeducators
- Increased confidence in teachers and paraeducators in the paraeducator's ability
- Increased confidence in school professionals to supervise paraeducators
- Assurance by all stakeholders that students are being served by qualified personnel
- Pay raises for paraeducators who have undergone training
- Better retention of paraeducators
- Improved teamwork among paraeducators and teachers (French, 1999).

Denver Public Schools

The Denver Public Schools offer Title I instruction to eligible students in preK-12. Paraprofessionals and teachers often team to provide instruction that is coordinated closely with the regular education program. They receive ongoing, in-depth professional development that is job related and site specific. New paraprofessionals receive training on basic and advanced math skills, instructional techniques, discovery, program curriculum, standards and assessment, learning, reporting to parents, working with academic concepts and techniques, and family involvement activities.

In addition to receiving training in the computer system used in instruction, bimonthly professional development opportunities and a monthly newsletter are provided. The program manager polls teachers and paraprofessionals for common concerns and interests for future staff

development. Although paraprofessionals and teachers may receive release time to attend, some sessions are offered after school.

Paraprofessionals are encouraged to take college classes and receive high quality individual training. In 637 middle and high schools, paraprofessionals run a tutoring project for students who require additional assistance in reading. Although the paraprofessionals report to the principal, they work closely with Title I and regular education teachers in the building. All tutors attend mandatory after school workshops for two hours each month. Based on student needs, tutors choose professional development topics, including using a diagnostic reading inventory, responding to students' writing, administering the program's four-day writing sample evaluation, and Socratic questioning (Leighton, et al., 1997).

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

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